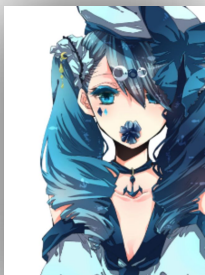




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# The Silent Treatment



violence

royalty

silence

457 55 45

## Chapter 1 by SaintSayaka

I have not spoken in five years. Some call it a quiet protest to the order of the New King. Some call it a bratty attempt for attention. I call it a curse for not speaking up sooner.

My father, the King of Roses, was thrown from his throne five years ago today in a violent revolution by the rich. They got inside the peasant's head, convincing them that my father had been cheating them of thousands of golden coins worth of taxes. They raced through the palace walls, razing it with servants and soldier's blood alike until reaching the king himself. Past that, I rather not think what came of him.

The New King, as they called him, was a "breath of fresh air", according to the people - at first. Taxes were abolished altogether, and the withering condition of the castle showed that. Wars ended because there was simply nothing worth conquering in our kingdom. Gold was quick to run out. Royal and regular alike are starving. It can't be long until he, too, is displaced by another riot.

It is just my luck that the New King has taken my hand in marriage, so I'll be there to see it.

[Chapter 2 by SaintSayaka](#)[See more of Story Wars](#)

I walk down the hallways  
how many times I have been

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my duties. I cannot recall  
tendency to hold into one  
another now, with little separation between the beginning and end. Seasons suffer the same

fate - when I pass by a window, I notice the green of the forest, and wonder about the snow that seemed to be there just yesterday. I don't share my thoughts with the maid at my hip, whom my husband instantly follows me everywhere. I believe he is of the opinion that I am a mute of some sort. The insults that he is comfortable throwing at me from across the dinner table (quite sparse, these days, our chef struggles to make meals out of molehills - sometimes literally, I feel) seem to suggest that. She isn't one for conversation either, which I appreciate. Every nurse and maid wants to be to one who gets the Silent Queen of Roses to speak.

We turn down the hallway and meet the throne room. I remember the days when it was gilded, and the wall wouldn't be caught dead without a tapestry of sort. These days, however, it is grey and cold. The throne is nothing more than a wooden chair, something that would be found in the common room of a lord's house. The New King is seated on it, and I bow, as much against my will as it has been since the very day he took my father's place.

"Welcome, Sylvia. Please, kneel at the stairs." His fingers rap at the sides of the chair, light and fast enough to make no noise. He is nervous about something. Ever since I have stopped speaking, my perception has increased. Not that anyone would know that.

She executes a flawless curtsy, and does as he asks. I stand alone now, wincing. I love Sylvia, and appreciate all that she has done for me, but for my husband to address a maid before he does the Queen...it is an intentional insult to my pride and standing. He looks me over as if I am lint stuck to the bottom of his tattered robes. I try to smile, as I do in his presence every day, but it is stuck in my teeth. I have no reason to smile in front of this monster.

"And as for you, my tainted Queen, you may stand at my side." His words are accompanied by a great deal of hand movement and waving, as if I am deaf or too stupid to take his command. I do not know which he believes. I do not have the courage to ask.

I walk up the stairs, briefly matching eyes with Sylvia. She smiles at me without issue. I wish I could do the same back. She means the world to me, though, with how bare mine is, I am not sure how much of a compliment that is. My feet find their way to the side of the chair, and I stare

out into the room vacantly. He never said that we had to look at one another.

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We stand in this position for what feels like hours, staring at our skin. The tapping has increased in speed, now it is a constant. We are standing like this.

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I wonder why my husband is silent. For all of my lack of speech, he has the world to say. This is unnatural. Something is wrong, and I can feel it in my bones.

That's when I see the first man enter the room, silent as a cat. Sylvia cannot see him, and she evidently does not hear him, for she remains on her knees, head faced down. I watch him step silently across the room, heading for the throne. Thoughts of him killing me enter my head sharply, but for whatever reason, I am not afraid.

I am afraid, however, when he grabs Sylvia by the scruff of her neck.

### Chapter 3 by Barry Allen



I reach out, intending to stop the man. But then I glance at my husband. I remember. Minutes ago, he seemed nervous. Last week, I walked in on him planning something. He always has me by his side, no matter how awful he thinks I am. I look at him now. His face has a small hint of pleasure. He planned this.

The swine! He had planned for this man to kidnap Sylvia! I expect an uproar, someone daring to kidnap an innocent girl in front of the King and Queen. But there is silence. Just like the king. They had all planned this together except for Sylvia and me! I had to stop them. Now.

I get up from my "throne". He notices. Of course, this is one of the only times he notices me do something.

"Tacita?" He questions me. No more. No more of his evil, dirty tricks. I feel the power calling within me. The sharp thorns on the rose. Deadly beauty. The branches of the royal roses come, through the doors, climbing higher and higher. They reach towards the man who has Sylvia. They grab him by the wrist. He yelps in pain. They squeeze him, tighter and tighter, until, all there's left is a single drop of his blood on the ground. Deadly and beautiful indeed.

### Chapter 4 by Conor Donaghy



Foliar tapestries crawled across the walls, as intricate root systems burrowed between the

succulent flagstones. The kidnapper's discolored remains hung at eye level, his mouth stretched taut in a mortal leer.

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"Roses are always hungry"

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My mother said that, before I could summon a single deadly bloom, or sophistry dared overthrow the thorny crown.

Distorted cries as Earls and Barons - my husband's cronies, their splendid adornments garish in the spartan throne room - rise jabbering and gesticulating

A shimmering fog obscures their faces, but my husband just looks past me wearing a complacent smile?

I struggle to bring the branches closer, to wrap him in their deadly embrace while my hatred and strength hold. The thorny boughs close in. I hear Sylvia shout, through my fogged vision, she points – behind me.

The king gives a satisfied nod...

...And I awaken to something clammy pressed against my aching skull. I lie on a firm ticklish surface, much harder than my bed.

*Where am I?*

Opening my eyes reveals a darkened room, heavy curtains over the windows are arranged to permit one dazzling chink of light.

"Thank heavens you're awake, ma'am," Sylvia whispers.

With a moan, I try to lift my head, which feels as though someone has mistaken it for a dinner gong.

"You will be tried for attempted regicide, sorcery and murder," says a harsh male voice.

People often try to startle me into speech with frightful pronouncements; yet, except in dreams, I keep my habitual silence.

Sylvia casts a look of loathing towards the dim figure beside the curtains.

"While so-called noblemen make and break laws," he continues, "the populace grows restive and their king does worse than oppress them. The revolution festering in their empty stomachs will

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I remember the calumnies with which those *noblemen* deposed my father; those who think me an attention seeking brat will need little persuasion that I am responsible for their penury. Words can be as deadly as roses.

"Your maid appears to have taken an inexplicable dislike to me ever since I coshed Your Highness." He strides into the light. "But how else could I obtain your help?"

### Chapter 5 by adware



It is a hideous sight-- a man once but not a man now, a rotting corpse with the soul long departed, suspended and puppeted by thorny vines of roses. My eyes follow the vines to where they wrap around the window sill and exit the room. Who stands below my window with this power of roses that matches my own?

### Chapter 6 by Rose Leiru



A puppet. That's all I ever was. The king intended for me to reveal my power, and execute me for it. He is cruel, and twisted, no better than a vile animal.

Sylvia is still shrieking beside me. I do nothing to comfort her. I fear that if I try, only my anger will emerge, lashing out at Sylvia. I can't afford to turn us against each other right now. I've kept my feelings inside for the last five years - I can do it for one more night.

The guard speaks again, his voice empty of any feeling, another pawn in the king's game.

"Your execution will begin at daybreak tomorrow. You shall both be burnt at the stake for sorcery."

The guard then leaves us in the room, placing a flickering candle on a rickety table. I am not used to being in these conditions. It is outrageous. I am tied to my chair, my hands in gloves so I cannot use my powers. I struggle for hours into the night to remove the worn work gloves, but to no avail.

Sylvia sobs into her shaking hands, being overly emotional as usual. I only sit in my chair, and fall into a silent sleep, most likely my

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I dream of extravagant balls, wars, tulips, daisies, pansies

Roses. I twist my hands, and the red petals obey, their thorny stems turning every way I tell them to. I cover the whole room in roses, in deadly beauty, just the way I like it.

But then, I feel another presence enter the room, and the roses recede. I turn to see who it is, but the room has fallen into darkness. The flowers are wilting, dried petals crumbling away. I try to save them, but even my roses, my perfect roses, are turning to dust in the dark.

I see a woman on the other side of the room, but I can't make out her features. This woman has my powers, this woman is more powerful than me.

I wake up as the morning bell rings. Guards immediately come to take me and Sylvia outside to our doom. As they drag us down the blank halls, I wonder what happened to the kingdom that once was. How did everything disappear so quickly?

We are escorted outside. The entire kingdom stands around a large, wooden stake sticking out of a stack of logs. A palace official stands straight and holds a torch, ready to burn two traitors to the crown.

The king stands on a balcony above.

"There has been a change in the sentence of our two sorceresses," he says, smiling. "They shall not die by fire. They shall die... by roses!"

The crowd cheered and I stare at Sylvia, wondering if she feels as nervous as I do. And yet, I am also curious. No two sorcerers have the same power. But this one and I do. What does it mean?

"Bring out the sorceress!!" the king shouts like a madman.

Five guards, armed to the teeth, walk through a doorway on the side of the castle. They emerge with a woman who seems strikingly familiar, even from a distance. She steps confidently, and the guards who escort her seem frightened.

The woman finally comes near enough for me to see her, and for the first time in five years, I gasp. Quietly, but the king has no idea. I turn to him.

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The woman is my mother.

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Chapter 7 by Elina Milk (CC BY-NC-ND)

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*A small girl sits in a garden. Behind her, a content mother watches her play with a stuffed toy.*

I try to run to my mother, but the guards held me back. I have to clamp my jaw shut to keep myself from crying out.

*The young girl becomes distracted by a bumblebee that flies to a nearby rose. She crawls away from her toy to follow the insect in its path to flowers.*

My mother has noticed me now, and her posture immediately collapses as she covers her mouth in disbelief.

*The girl's mother has seen her crawling towards the flowers now, and she sets her book down to see what will happen.*

I writhe around, trying to escape this impending doom, just trying to hug my mother once more.

*Closer to the roses now, the little girl reaches out to touch a white flower petal.*

The guards drag me towards the wooden stake. My mother is pulled as well. I reach for her, tears forming at the base of my eyes. Why are they doing this?

*Her chubby fingers finally connect with the rose petals, and she feels a surge of power through her body.*

I feel a surge of power through my body as the first rose petal drifts down and lands on my head.

*I am this girl.*

That girl is me.

## Chapter 8 by Tricia L



The vines whip out by my power, but it seems supplemented.

Is my mother helping me?

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The guards which hold me back, I turn to Sylvia, gently wrapping a vine around her and depositing her safely off to the side.

My husband calls for the guards, but none of them move, terrified of their fates.

A strong vine lifts me up to the balcony on which he stands, and I grab him by the throat. I bring him down to the ground.

The crowd, for some reason, hadn't left. Perhaps they had realized what happened.

His ear was next to my face when I spoke.

the end

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